

1: Petrullo

SS19 Yaruro SS19

756

/The author refers throughout the monograph to male and female shamans. The male shamans qualify both for category 756 and 791, but since their principal activities fall under 787, they are considered here in category 791. When activities of either shaman are specifically psychotherapeutic, these activities will be classified under category 755. /

361

captive turtles; and a few human beings were sitting or lying in the midst of all this, and exposed to all of the elements.

[203]

791

Among primitive people news travels rapidly. Landaeta, in this case, received me with the air of one who was expecting a visitor and it turned out that my reputation had preceded me. Not only did he know that I was in the country, but also why I was there. He was expecting me in order to teach me his ways and the ways of his people, and to learn my ways and the ways of my people. To him I was a shaman, no different than himself, who knew their mother goddess intimately and who was perhaps related to the gods themselves. He asked me for pictures of Kuma and Kuma's land. I soon discovered that he was under the illusion that in some way I was on intimate terms with the Yaruro's god.

763

A little to one side a branch was planted in the sand, and lying in its thin shade a girl was waiting to die. She was burning with fever and delirious. Her people were hovering over her, without being able to alleviate her sufferings or to help her to the end of life. Her malady was a new one to them, passed on by the newcomers to their world, and therefore they had no remedy for it.

758

123

The sick girl was Landaeta's daughter and as one physician to another, he came to me requesting that I save his daughter from death. Being neither physician, magician, nor priest, I responded to his plea the best way I could. Lest I be drawn into a situation of attempting to cure a sick person without adequate knowledge of the sickness or its remedy, I moved off the same day to seek other Yaruros; but only after Landaeta had promised that he would commence his journey in the cool of the evening and rejoin me several days later.

577

It has often been said that to accept the promise of a primitive Indian is to abandon all thought of its being remembered. Perhaps it would seem that I put too much faith and trust in my friends in sitting down to wait for them to join me. But a promise made and accepted without coercion is to the Indian one that has to be kept; and, as in many other cases of my experience with primitive people, this one was kept.

123

That the feeling of suspicion had not disappeared completely was proven by the attitude of another hunting group which I visited. I went alone among them, and unarmed. On my arrival in a canoe, carrying no equipment, they sullenly warned me to keep away from them and their camp. However, good will is never unproductive, and when they saw that I merely squatted on the sands, shared my tobacco with them, said nothing, and then cheerfully paddled away, their hearts must have melted, for several days later they too had joined my band of friends, later becoming among those most deeply attached to me.

841 piece of cloth. (Among the peoples of the Xingu in Brazil she is made to wear her hair over her face, and she is kept from the sight of men.) Whether during this period special initiatory rites are performed I was not able to find out. This part of Yaruro culture is considered to be in the women's domain, and, being a man, I was kept from delving into it.

123
841

MARRIAGE

527 The Yaruros are poor in social ceremonies. Anciently they may have practiced a great many of them but today social life is comparatively simple.

885 When a boy is ready to marry he may approach his father, or as a matter of fact, the father may approach the son. In any case he is sent to the shaman, who informs him that now he should be ready to assume the duties of a man, and proceeds to instruct him in the nature of those duties. He is told that he must love and cherish his wife; supply her plentifully with food, clothing, ornaments, and children; that he must never use harsh words toward her and that he must take care of her when she is sick; that he must never quarrel with her family, with whom he is expected to live; and of particular importance, that he must remember to take care of his father-in-law and mother-in-law. All of this is ordained by Kuma.

791
584
[183]
[577]

584 The shaman will then approach the boy's uncle who has a marriageable daughter. No special ceremony seems to take place. The boy simply goes to live with the wife's family and assumes his duties of taking care of her as well as of his parents-in-law.

585
791

SICKNESS AND DEATH

751 Not much material was available on sickness. It must be remembered that the Yaruros have been in contact with European ideas for several centuries and that they understand the use of medicine for the cure of a specific illness.

757

753 Nevertheless, Kiberoh, the evil night spirit, is in some fashion associated with illness. If Kiberoh enters the body of a person, the latter will become ill. In such cases the only cure is the intercession of Kuma, who can be called upon to help by the shaman or músico, a term adapted from the Spanish to describe the singing shaman.

752

755 The sick person is laid on the ground with his head pointing to the east. At sundown the shaman will stand to the north of the sick person and will proceed to sing, accompanying himself with the rattle. The rest of the people, with the exception of any woman in her menstrual period, line up behind the shaman and sing and dance as they generally do during any of the shamanistic performances. If they indulge in any dancing, however, they do not go around a

[841]

755 pole in a circle but merely move forward and backward. During the performance it is prohibited for anyone to pass by the head of the sick person. The shaman will sing all night and if by morning the sick person has not shown any marked improvement the woman shaman will lie in a hammock with her head pointing to the east and will continue the singing. Other women will sit in the hammock with her and sing all day long. I myself underwent such attention. If the wife shows little interest in the welfare of her husband it is concrete proof that she does not love him and it is believed he will die. In this there are two factors to be considered from my observation of these people. The first is that a lack of wifely interest is the equivalent of bad medicine and that the husband himself will feel so disconsolate that all desire to live will be lost.

763 If the sick person dies during the night nothing is done except to stop the singing and dancing. At daybreak his people will drink vast quantities of chicha and prepare for the funeral rites. If the sick person happens to be a woman in her menstrual period it is important to note that she is in the care of the woman shaman. The man shaman does not dare to sing to her.

764 In the morning the dead person is washed by the women and the body is wrapped in a hammock and taken to the burial place. The brothers and the uncles carry the body. The father and mother do not accompany the body to the grave, but in the case of a married man the widow does. The body is interred in the hammock with the head pointing to the east. The bow and arrows, whatever clothing he may have possessed, and any equipment are buried with him, but neither food nor water is necessary. The night after the burial there is a feast in the camp, but the taboo on fish is observed by everyone. The shaman and the people will sing the equivalent of:

[539] The dead one died here, now he has arrived in the Land of Kuma, and there he has been made young again (if a child dies, it becomes a young man or woman, according to the sex). He will know nothing but joy now and will have everything he may desire.

[787] The widow goes on a strict diet for four days. All fires which were burning at the time of the death of the individual are put out and fresh ones are built. On the fourth day the two men, who have put the dead body into the pit, and the widow, bathe; they fast on the fifth. On the fifth night the shaman sings in order to find out if the dead person has reached Kuma, if he has been given a new name, if he has been made young, strong, and rich. For a month after this the widow keeps a strict diet and she is not married for a long time. It is believed that if a man marries a widow soon after her husband has died he will die soon of the same sickness.

221 Finally, the Yaruro deny any considerable long-term oscillations in the
262 environment and consequently in the resources. The extremes, particularly the minima, of habitat factors which regulate food and population balances, according to Liebig's Law, fall within narrow limits and again elicit no special institutions of management or of equilibrium maintenance to compensate for them, as in the case of the potlatches of the Northwest Coast of America, the buffalo hunts in the Great Plains of the United States, or the use of pigs in Melanesia.²³

VI

868 One more point may be made regarding the ecology as limiter of chieftainship among the Yaruro. The tools, techniques, and resources require no very extensive, highly specialized or esoteric knowledge. In fact any man or woman, and any child as well, has access to such knowledge, and it is easily acquired by all members of the society who thus have, at least potentially, equal access to control over the means of life. There is no specialized knowledge, at least with respect to technology and habitat, which requires a specialized repository in the form of a chief or learned person. Yaruro knowledge, itself dependent upon the inventory of tools, techniques, and resources, inhibits any tendency towards the development of any
[463] sort of specialists in technical or managerial knowledge. As one might expect, there are no true specialists in Yaruro society. Here and there women make pots and certain women seem to have a special bent for making woven sacks but these are not properly specialties. Nor, from a technological or ecological point of
[756] view, is male or female shamanism in any way a speciality. They do not appear to be specialists even in esoteric knowledge. Knowledge of the general type described here might be called 'dispersive' or 'egalitarian' since it tends to become more or less uniformly distributed among the members of the society. A consequence of the existence of this type of knowledge, associated with the kind of technology described, is that there will be no specialised training of any specialists and, of course, no specialised personnel to do such training. This is the situation which obtains among the Yaruro both with respect to technical and managerial activities. Thus, in Yaruro knowledge, there is no source for the support of an institutionalized and strong chieftainship.

VII

221 In one respect, the ecology encourages chiefly functions. A balance is struck
241 between the cultural resources, the possibilities that the habitat affords for their
361 production, and the length of time that areas of land can be exploited. This is
622 particularly true of the horticultural lands since they can no longer be used after three years of cropping, and it becomes necessary to move on. The result is that there is a slow migration of resource areas, chiefly of horticultural areas across the tribal territory. The lands in cultivation move further and further from any given village until a point of suspension is reached at which the walking and working

²³ Cf. Suttles, 1960 a, 1960 b; Llewelly and Hoebel, 1941; Vayda, 1961; Vayda, Leeds, and Smith, 1961.

776
775

[622]

775
776
772

return to earth and guide the community. In this manner, Ku'maⁿ is a center of gravity of the Yaruro ideological life. She is the center of a communications network which ties the Yaruro of the hither-world, those of the other-worlds, and the gods all in one continuous system of personal and social relations. This is somewhat the position of the spokesman or 'capitan' in the community life of the Yaruro, though he has proportionally much less influence in his village than Ku'maⁿ has in her universe.

[771]

776
771

In sum, the gods and the dead are conceptualized as continuous with those of us on earth. Conceptually they appear to constitute the two highest steps in the age levels: infant, child, young adult, elder, the dead, and the gods. The last four classes are increasingly instrumental in teaching the ethics of living in tranquility, of respect and deference to one's spouse and to all members of one's people, and in teaching the values of the community. They exhort but never compel the community to follow these ideals. These precepts are followed not only among the egalitarian gods in their autonomous other-world communities, but in the personal and social relations between the gods and the hither-world *pumé*. The relations between men and gods, the communication between the hither- and other-worlds, the cosmography itself, all show quite clearly that there is no separation of "natural" and "supernatural", as discrete classes of events. The cosmos, society, and man are a single system in Yaruro thought.

The nexus through which the flow of life in the other-world and the ongoing rhythm of daily life in the hither-world are meshed into a single system is the religious ceremony, the *tonghé*. Some description of the *tonghé* will afford us further insight into Yaruro ideology.

776
● 756
787

[757]

[776]

During the night-long *tonghés*, the entire community sits behind the shaman, ranged roughly by age levels. The women sit to his right, the men to his left. At dusk he begins to sing as he starts his journey to the land of Ku'maⁿ through the dark, cold land of Kiberó, the toad who gave man fire. In hundreds of improvised verses and melodies, he describes his journey, and then, after his arrival about midnight, his adventures in the lands of Ku'maⁿ and subsequently of the other gods. In each verse, the shaman sings an intonation which the entire community repeats in an identical antiphon. Thus the full experience of the shaman is transmitted to and shared by every member of the community. All is public; there is no secret knowledge. The shaman urges his people to sing with him and the other-worldly beings, to share in the responsibilities and joys of the community in supporting their individual members whether the shaman in his journey or the sick person for whom the *tonghé* may be being held. At the same time, in Ku'maⁿ land, he urges the other-worldly beings to come to advise his people and teach them. Later, the verses are no longer sung by the shaman, but rather by the dead and the gods who arrive in the husk of the shaman which he has left behind as a channel of communications for the other-worldly beings while his divisible self travels abroad. As these beings arrive in the shaman's husk, all members of the community may greet them by putting their arms around them or giving them cigarettes or drink. This is done separately by women, sometimes in groups, and by men. Throughout the ceremony the chief link between the sexually divided community is the shaman or the gods in the shaman's husk upon whom both sexes are focusing

ANTROPOLOGICA

their attention. The shaman's position as link is emphasized by the fact that his wife invariably sits next to him during the *tonghês* to minister to him and to supply him cigarettes and drink. Thus, the socio-economic link of the household is also the unique link between the sexes in ceremonial life.

The various forms of socio-economic and ceremonial division of the sexes is even more remarkably underscored by the existence of female shamanism. As one might expect, shamanesses behave differently from shamans. Shamanesses sing only in the day-time. They, like Ku'man, sing from hammocks whereas men sing sitting on the ground or dancing. Furthermore, messages transmitted to them from Ku'man are sent only to them, though the men hear and understand them. The men listen to these messages with care and respect and with the air that there are things to be learned from them which they would otherwise not hear. The shamanesses cannot receive male gods or their messages. Female shamanism seems to be an affirmation of the kin-bonds of the matri-centered local group as well as a means of asserting the values and rights pertaining to the women's world. The women's experience ideologically, as well as socially and biologically, is recognized as being systematically distinct from men's experience in life.

Behavior in the *tonghês* is very relaxed. Villagers laugh, joke, sleep, play, get up, walk about. Sometimes persons may even fail to attend if they have chosen to go to work the next day. The only thing explicitly forbidden, because Ku'man would consider it most indelicate, is sexual intercourse. Otherwise, the lack of formalism and freedom of individual behavior so often noted before is again found here.

The importance of the *tonghês* as the foremost way of reinforcing social relations and communal values as well as for curing is seen in several ways. First, when there has been no *tonghê* for several days, one begins to feel and hear a bruiting for another *tonghê*. It is felt that much time has elapsed since the last *tonghê*. Someone asks what's wrong that we haven't had a *tonghê* in so long. Another says we need a *tonghê*. Rumors of *tonghê* begin to be heard. By the fifth or sixth day another *tonghê* is held and community bonds are again reasserted. Again, the sexual division of labor and social life observed in the other- and hither-worlds is systematically carried through into religious observances. We have mentioned the seating of men separate from women and the separate greetings given to the gods. This theme is carried still further in the exclusive women's shamanism and the equally exclusive capacity of men to do curing, either as shamans or as purely private individuals.

The *tonghê* illuminates much about Yaruro ideology. First, shamans both male and female are not considered authorities possessed of special gifts and prerogatives who interpret lore for the entire community. Rather they are considered merely the community religious spokesmen for the public expression of community values and for curing, who, by their own choice, enjoy and are willing to undertake the long, arduous work of training and practice. They reaffirm community bonds by repeating in endless verses the precepts and knowledge contained in the Yaruro ideology. All knowledge and all experience is, at least potentially, open to all members of the community and even the private or personal experience of each is made known to all. Any member of

787
796
756787
796
562
796

[602]

781
796
787

[834]

787
79
182
562

[756]

756
796
182

SOCIEDAD DE CIENCIAS NATURALES LA SALLE

the community may do the shaman's work if he chooses, just as any can travel to the other-world or commune with the gods, although, because of age, temperament, or individual taste, not every one does so. There were, in fact, two shamans among the nine men of the writer's village, as well as a number of men who cured and who occasionally sang verse intonations in the *tonghés* although they were not shamans. The shamans are no more than respected community members outside the ceremony. Here again we observe the egalitarianism and individual self-determinism which is so much a pattern of this culture.

The *tonghé* also clearly shows the relationships which prevail between men and gods. The shamans and the other adults of the village converse with the gods in great mutual respect. They do not manipulate them nor minister to them, nor implore them. Before the gods, they are in a position corresponding to active and adept junior members of the village before their elders and especially their lineal ascendants. Furthermore, in a very real sense, no individual person, *qua* person, deals with the gods. The community, with its religious catalyst, the shaman, is the unit of action. The only individual relations with the gods occur in dreams, unconsciousness, and death. Dreams about gods are made public by singing aloud in sleep, the experience of unconsciousness is recounted publicly, and death, too, becomes public because the dead man is accessible through the *tonghés*.

The directness of contact between man and gods again emphasizes the unity of cosmos, society, and man. Within this unity, the sharp division of a male sphere from a female sphere is found. These quite coordinate spheres, in the other-worlds as in the hither-world, in religion as in socio-economic life, are linked through the household.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to review the major dimensions of Yaruro ideology. We may state these as a set of propositions, each presenting a major dimension of the ideology.

1. Cosmic structure. *The cosmos is static, limited, concrete, and internally continuous in that no barriers separate man and his society in the physical world from the nonphysical world.* The parts of the universe together form a rather rigid, symmetrical, architectonic structure, although each individual Yaruro may vary the description of the whole to suit his particular taste. All parts are of roughly coordinate importance. The major motions of nature, such as thunder and lightning, the revolutions of sun and moon, are often embodied, personalized, and independently operating entities, moved by semi-human motivations.
2. The good. *Goodness inheres generally in the cosmos as a system. The goodness manifests itself in understood causes and concretely and descriptibly known parts of the cosmos which, whether places, persons, or things, are given exact locations.* Conversely all known and localizable objects, persons, or places and understood causes are generally good.
3. The not-good. *Evil, which is not polar to good, finds its locus in specific persons, things, or events inside or outside the cosmos, and is manifest in specific results. The underlying causes of evil, however, are inac-*

/117 cont./

3. The Population.

162

a) Demography (see Tables III, IV, and V).

On the Capanaparo and the Riecito we have taken a census of 519 Yaruro (29 communities out of 30). Two-thirds (65.1%) of this population are adults (we do not have a breakdown by age) and the remainder (34.9%) prepuberal children. Among the adults the sexes are divided into two almost equal figures: 173 (51.2%) are men and 165 (48.8%) women. We have the /118/ /Table III appears here/ /119/ /Table IV and Table V appear here/ /120/ breakdown by sexes for children only in five communities; the totals for each of them gives us, there also, two figures which are practically equal: 23 male children to 21 female.

163
165

Our statistics on births and mortality bear on only three communities with a total of 38 inhabitants in 1947; they are thus rather imprecise. During the period 1947 to 1950, i.e., during three years, we registered 6 births and 9 deaths (6 adults—2 men and 4 women—and 3 young children), that is, two births for three deaths (150% mortality) or, for the total population of the three villages, the respective percentages of 15.8% births and 23.7% deaths. The young children who died comprise one-third of the total of deaths (33.3%) and one half of the total births, which gives, for these 38 Yaruro, a 50% infant mortality.

161

On the basis of these statistics the Yaruro are on the way to extinction. This appears to be confirmed by the Indians themselves who state that they were formerly more numerous and that their number is going down each year. "We die with the first sickness," our old informant, Pedro Ramon Camacho (1)

[115]
[756]

1. Head and shaman of community 6.

told us, "and that's why there are so few of us. We are disappearing."

[text continues on p. 16]

/10 cont. /

II. Notes on the Otomaco

101 From information gathered principally from Pedro Ramón
186 Camacho (10) it seems that the Otomaco or Tomaco were the

115
622
756

10. Chief and shaman of community
No. 6, our best informant.

object on the part of the Yaruro of a regard completely
different from that they had for the other Indians who were
their neighbors (11).

101

11. In addition to the neighbors
already cited in a previous article
(see "infra" IV List...36) names of
other Indians, known, it seems, by
the Yaruro, were mentioned to us by
various informants in the course of
our investigations. Some appear to
live at present in Colombia; the
Mayaredo or Mayarero, "very far
to the west of Yaruro territory, there
where the savanna ends," which no
doubt means at the foot of the Andes;
the Saliba and Taparito cya korome
more particularly on the upper Meta;
and the Tiapaco, Tiarua, and Mapoyó
without fixed localization. The others
seem to have disappeared: the
Piquero (tabe pume in Yaruro), who
"cultivated conucos and had a game
with a ball" and seem to have inhabited
the banks of the Orinoco on the
Cinaruco side, and the Guamo,
Tamanaco, Tamanachi, and Guaruro.

social features reported, ideological features reported, and relations with other tribes mentioned. The card sets will be arranged by geographical location of the tribe so that for any given time period one may pull out all the sets and arrange the tribes in their spatial order. Thus for any time period a picture of the trait distributions, cultural-ecological conditions, inter-tribal socio-ecological relations, and acculturational-social contacts and events should be obtainable.

V

Though, to date, I have been concerned mainly with collecting bibliography and documentary materials rather than with their analysis, I should like to hazard several very tentative conclusions, or perhaps guesses, with respect to the ethnohistory of the llanos, and particularly of the Yaruro, based on the geographic, ethnographic, archaeological, linguistic, and historical data known to me now. Some, however, are presented more as hypotheses for proof or disproof through continued research.

First, Petrullo's description is erroneous at least as respects the subsistence economy. Late Nineteenth Century travellers like Crévaux and Vela and several persons in this century mention horticulture. Still earlier reports go back to the earlier Eighteenth Century when missionaries speak of horticulture. Their reports apply to the Yaruro, Otomaco, Guahibo, and other groups. It has not yet been possible to decide whether they introduced or found horticulture among these peoples. Petrullo's error appears to have several explanations:

A) That he was incapacitated for several weeks by sore feet and was unable to travel about the land away from the rivers. In my experience, a careful crisscrossing of the land on foot is an absolute necessity if one is to know how these peoples carry on their subsistence activities. I have paced off with a pedometer the entire area used by the group I worked with. In the course of so doing I discovered all kinds of gardens, houses, and other evidences of their land use. These would not otherwise have been discovered by an observer not mentioned by the Yaruro, since mainly what is physically present is, to them, worthy of mention.¹⁰ I should say a great portion of my most important data came from such accidental discoveries made while walking about.

¹⁰ I would stand at a certain spot in a garden and ask "Whose garden is this?" "Juan's." Then I might walk perhaps ten feet and say, "Juan keeps his garden well." "But this is not Juan's garden." "You just said that this was Juan's garden." "That was over there on the other side of that row of corn." This happened a number of times. I also asked once, "Is there female shamanism here?" "No." Several days later, a group from an neighboring village came to visit. After an all-night session of the *ton'be*, several women performed shamanistic rites. I said, "I thought you said there is no female shamanism here?" "There isn't anyone here [i. e. in our locality] who practices — these women are from upstream." The same cleaving to locus was observed with respect to time. I was told that Miguel was a shaman ("musico"). I said "Miguel, are you not a musico?" "I am not a musico. I cannot sing." A few weeks later, he was singing. I said,

114 B) Petrullo restricted his visits to the sand banks along and in the river,
 114 and, after his first arrival, most of his travelling was done on the streams.
 241 Gardens are never to be found on the sand banks and bars, but rather, usually,
 on the affluent creeks which are just above flood level of the rivers in the
 rainy season. Therefore he was not in a position to see the gardens which Le
 Besnerais later saw in the same area when he explored back from the river.

C) Petrullo was in the llanos in the dry season when the Yaruro move
 nearer the rivers both to secure a water supply as the water table lowers and
 to avail themselves of the much more plentiful and accessible river fauna¹¹ at
 a time when vegetable harvests are reduced because of drought. He was there-
 fore observing dry-season subsistence — and perhaps only a part of it.

D) The probability that he observed only a part of the dry-season sub-
 sistence pattern in his area is reinforced by two considerations:

[648] 1) He reports the fact that 150 Yaruro had been massacred by Venezuelans
 722 a month before his arrival (p. 181). Their response under such cir-
 731 cumstances is, as fast as possible, to get off the land that the Venezuelans
 want and to move to the rivers. I myself had occasion to observe such
 a diaspora, occurring in response to a smaller massacre. In view of this
 sort of response, it is likely, therefore, that Petrullo's group was living
 off river resources and away from their gardens at the time of his visit.

[311] 2) Maps indicate that in the lower part of the Capanaparo River, the flood-
 ing is greater and the number and size of side creeks suitable for
 horticulture is smaller than upstream on any of the large rivers. In other
 words, the available area for garden plots is much smaller, and riverine
 subsistence proportionately more important. Upriver, and more especial-
 ly on the Sinaruco and on the middle and upper Cunaviche and Arauca
 rivers, there is much more tillable ground.

114 "I thought you said you could not sing and were not a musico?" "Yes, that was true
 124 last week when I had the gripe, but now my gripe is better I can be a musico again."
 126 And many similar examples of the extreme caution one needed to exercise regarding
 241 negative responses in order to be sure they were not merely descriptive of the place and
 moment. If Petrullo asked "Do you raise crops?", his informants would most likely have
 311 said, "No, we have no crops here", under the circumstances in which he found them.

156 11) The river fauna is more plentiful and accessible in dry season because, first, it is
 more concentrated, and, second, it is more visible. During the wet, flooding season, fish,
 136 and other animals spread even into smaller streams and out upon the watery llanos — we
 226 caught a small piranha on the grassy, watercovered plain itself. On the plains, the fish
 are lost among the grasses and are virtually impossible to spear or shoot with bow and
 arrow. The river turbulence of the rainy season, meanwhile, has brought so much mud
 from further upstream that many of the rivers are opaque, especially in those parts of
 the llanos constructed of mud rather than sandy soils. Fish and the water reptiles and
 mammals are well-cloaked by the murky stream. The waters and the plains clear in the
 dry season so that the fish are concentrated in the limpid, grassless waters of the rivers,
 while land animals and riparian fauna are all crowded together near the banks in their
 search for food and water.